

CLAIMS:

1. A system for performing an inventory of an asset of a network, the system comprising:

an agent operable, in accordance with a set of operating parameters, to perform the inventory and to generate a set of inventory data based thereupon;

a collection server operable to receive the inventory data from the agent, and to parse the set of inventory data according to a pre-established parsing scheme; and

a directory server operable to receive the parsed set of inventory data from the collection server, and to store the parsed set of inventory data for future reference.

2. The system as set forth in claim 1, wherein the asset is selected from the group consisting of: servers, workstations, and firewalls.

3. The system as set forth in claim 1, where the set of operating parameters include -

a periodicity with which to perform the inventory; and
an IP address of the collection server.

4. The system as set forth in claim 1, wherein the set of inventory data includes -

a type and a version of an operating system running on the asset;
a current IP address of the asset; and
a type, a version, and a name of a software application running on the asset.

5. The system as set forth in claim 1, wherein the agent includes a digital certificate operable to identify the asset to the collection server and to authenticate the set of inventory data.

6. The system as set forth in claim 5, wherein the digital certificate allows for encryption of the set of inventory data.

7. The system as set forth in claim 1, wherein the directory server stores the parsed set of inventory data in a hierarchical database.

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8. A system for performing an inventory of an asset of a network, the system comprising:

an agent stored on and executed by the asset and operable, in accordance with a set of operating parameters, to perform the inventory and to generate a set of inventory data based thereupon, with the agent having a digital certificate operable to identify the asset and to authenticate the set of inventory data;

a collection server operable to receive the set of inventory data from the agent, identify the asset, authenticate the set of inventory data, and parse the set of inventory data according to a pre-established parsing scheme; and

a directory server operable to receive the parsed set of inventory data from the collection server, and to store the parsed set of inventory data for future reference.

9. The system as set forth in claim 8, wherein the asset is selected from the group consisting of: servers, workstations, and firewalls.

10. The system as set forth in claim 8, where the set of operating parameters include -

a periodicity with which to perform the inventory; and
an IP address of the collection server.

11. The system as set forth in claim 8, wherein the set of inventory data includes -

a type and a version of an operating system running on the asset;
a current IP address of the asset; and
a type, a version, and a name of a software application running on the asset.

12. The system as set forth in claim 8, wherein the digital certificate allows for encryption of the set of inventory data.

13. The system as set forth in claim 8, wherein the directory server stores the parsed set of inventory data in a hierarchical database.

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14. A system for performing an inventory of an asset of a network, the system comprising:

an agent stored on and executed by the asset and operable to perform the inventory and to generate a set of inventory data based thereupon, wherein the inventory is performed in accordance with a set of operating parameters including a periodicity with which to perform the inventory and an identifier which identifies the collection server;

a collection server operable to receive the set of inventory data from the agent, and to parse the set of inventory data according to a pre-established parsing scheme; and

a directory server operable to receive the parsed set of inventory data from the collection server, and to store the parsed set of inventory data in a hierarchical database for future reference.

15. A computer program for performing an inventory on an asset of a network, wherein the computer program is storable on a computer-readable memory medium and executable by a computing device; the computer program comprising:

a code segment for performing, according to a set of operating parameters,

the inventory of the asset to generate a set of inventory data;

a code segment for sending the set of inventory data to a collection server;

a code segment for parsing the set of inventory data at the collection server;

and

a code segment for storing the parsed set of inventory data.

16. The computer program as set forth in claim 15, wherein the code segment for storing the parsed set of inventory data does so in a hierarchical format.

17. A method of performing an inventory on an asset of a network, the method comprising the steps of:

- (a) performing, according to a set of operating parameters, the inventory of the asset to generate a set of inventory data;
- (b) sending the set of inventory data to a collection server;
- (c) parsing the set of inventory data at the collection server; and
- (d) storing the parsed set of inventory data.

18. The method as set forth in claim 17, wherein step (d) involves storing the parsed set of inventory data in a hierarchical format.

19. The method as set forth in claim 17, further including the step of (e) providing a digital signature to accompany the set of inventory data.

20. The method as set forth in claim 17, further including the step of (e) encrypting the set of inventory data prior to step (b) and decrypting the set of inventory data prior to step (c).

21. A method of performing an inventory on an asset of a network, the method comprising the steps of:

- (a) performing, according to a set of operating parameters, the inventory of the asset to generate a set of inventory data;
- (b) providing a digital signature to accompany the set of inventory data;
- (c) encrypting the set of inventory data;
- (d) sending the set of inventory data to a collection server;
- (e) identifying the asset and authenticating the set of inventory data at the collection server based upon the digital certificate;
- (f) decrypting the set of inventory data at the collection server;
- (g) parsing the set of inventory data at the collection server; and
- (h) storing the parsed set of inventory data in a hierarchical format.